



**An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthaí Óige**  
Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs

## Annual Report 2017

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## FOREWORD BY THE MINISTER

It is my great pleasure to welcome publication of the sixth Annual Report of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Report outlines the progress made in 2017 across all areas of the Department's responsibilities.

It was a great privilege for me to be appointed as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in May 2016 and to join with the Secretary General and staff in setting out our vision for the future work and direction of the Department. That vision reflects a commitment to deliver on key commitments in the Programme for Government, and also the Department's Statement of Strategy.

We have set a challenging and ambitious agenda, with the objective of effecting necessary improvements in services and, in turn, in the quality of lives of those children and young people who need our help and support.

Delivery of this agenda is underpinned by significant investment which I was in a position to secure from the Government. The 2017 Vote provision was just over €1.3 billion, an increase of €173 million over the previous year. It includes significant additional resources for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and in childcare supports.

We have delivered a comprehensive range of legislative and policy initiatives in 2017. One of the most significant aspects was in the area of child protection, where all remaining provisions of the Children First Act 2015 were commenced on 11th December 2017, including delivery of a longstanding Government commitment to the introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse. Other key initiatives included the publication of the legislation required to underpin the Affordable Childcare Scheme and the commencement of the Adoption (Amendment) Act which gives effect to the Constitutional amendment regarding the rights of children.

The Department also initiated a series of reforms, including the introduction of an obligation on Tusla to prepare an aftercare plan for eligible young people leaving care, the ending of the practice of detaining children in adult prisons, the introduction of a new bail supervision scheme for young people and the beginning of important work on the reform of Guardian *ad litem* services. The Department also continued to consult with young people and to include them in decision-making. Hub na nÓg was launched to facilitate this process.

We are also continuing to play our part in delivering on other whole of Government commitments, including in the area of homelessness in helping families through implementation of *Rebuilding Ireland: the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*.

I want to warmly acknowledge the work done by the Department and the sector over the year. I have had the opportunity to work closely with staff and with colleagues across the system, who are effecting real change and improvement in the lives of children and young people. I have the greatest of admiration and respect for what they do in seeking to make Ireland a better place for children and young people to grow up and develop.

Dr. Katherine Zappone TD  
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.



## INTRODUCTION BY SECRETARY GENERAL

Our Annual Report for 2017 covers the sixth full year of work in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and is published in accordance with section 4 of the Public Service Management Act 1997.

We had another very busy and productive year in 2017, during which we worked hard to advance the priorities contained in our Statement of Strategy 2016-2019. For example, we:

- commenced mandatory reporting as a legal requirement under the Children First Act;
- worked closely with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency on a range of child protection and welfare measures;
- implemented significant improvements to child care supports as a prelude to the forthcoming Affordable Childcare Scheme;
- ended the detention of children in adult prisons;
- introduced an obligation on Tusla to prepare an aftercare plan for eligible young people leaving care;
- commenced the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 which gave effect to the Constitutional amendment in relation to children;
- launched Hub na nÓg to support participation of children and young people in decision-making;
- published legislative proposals for reforming the Guardian *ad litem* system;
- introduced a new bail supervision scheme to help reduce the number of young people being detained and;
- consulted with young people on what Brexit means for them.

These are just some of the things we did in 2017 as described much more fully in this annual report.

I thank colleagues in other Government Departments, agencies and the wider children's sector for their continued co-operation and support. It is vital that we have good working relationships, which help us to develop and deliver policies designed to support our children, young people and families.

We continue to work closely with our Minister, Dr Katherine Zappone TD, and to drive forward the commitments in the Programme for a Partnership Government.

Finally I am happy to record my great appreciation of the staff of the Department who work every day in many different ways to help improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. We are pressing ahead with an ambitious programme of development and reform which could not be achieved without them.

Fergal Lynch  
Secretary General

## Who We Are and What We Do

### Mandate

The core function of our Department is to put in place a unified framework for policy, legislation and service provision across Government for children and young people.

In doing this, we focus on harmonising policy issues that affect children and young people in areas such as early childhood care and education, youth justice, children in care, child welfare and protection, adoption, family support, children and young people's participation, research on children and young people, youth work and cross-cutting initiatives for children.

The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 – *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* – provides the context for our own work as well as the agenda for our leadership of effort to improve outcomes for children and young people.

### Our Mission – Why we exist

To lead the effort to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland.

### Our Vision – Where we want to get to

We want Ireland to be one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family. A place where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard; and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

### Strategic Objectives

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures is implemented	High quality early years care and education is accessible and affordable	Child welfare and protection systems are effective and responsive
Evidence-based policy is promoted and supported, and children and young people participate in decisions that affect their lives	High standards of compliance on governance and accountability are supported and enforced	Performance is improved through the effective alignment of resources

### Our Values, Behaviours & Culture

We place children, young people and families at the heart of our work, aiming for better outcomes as the centre of policy development and service delivery	We value our staff and create an environment where they learn, develop and contribute to the goals of the organisation	We place outcomes for children and young people at the centre of policy and service delivery, informed by evidence
We support prevention and early intervention approaches	We seek to innovate and collaborate with other departments, agencies and sectors	We are accountable, open to change, customer-focused and respectful in our dealings with the public and work colleagues
	We recognise the positive duty to ensure a human rights and equality approach to our work.	

## Part 1 - Overview

### **1. Strategic Objectives:**

The work of the Department is underpinned by our Statement of Strategy 2016-2019, which includes six Strategic Objectives as follows:

- ***Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* is implemented**
  - *During 2017 our work included addressing issues of child poverty, strengthening Children and Young People's Service Committees, and commencing our Quality and Capacity Building Initiative.*
- **High quality early years care and education is accessible and affordable**
  - *During 2017 we advanced implementation of the Access and Inclusion Model, worked on a new Affordable Childcare Scheme, and delivered a range of quality initiatives in child care supports.*
- **Child welfare and protection systems are effective and responsive**
  - *During 2017 we introduced mandatory reporting, advanced proposals for reforming the Guardian ad Litem system and commenced new legal provisions for those leaving care.*
- **Evidence-based policy is promoted and supported, and children and young people participate in decisions that affect their lives**
  - *During 2017 we put in place arrangements for implementing our Participation Strategy for children and young people, worked intensively on preparing the first ever LGBTI+ Youth Strategy, and advanced our research agenda under Growing up in Ireland and the State of the Nation's Children reports.*
- **High standards of compliance on governance and accountability are supported and enforced**
  - *During 2017 we worked with Tusla on governance and oversight improvements, updated the Department's Governance Framework, and strengthened our Internal Audit function.*
  - *Signed a comprehensive Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Pobal.*
- **Performance is improved through the effective alignment of resources**
  - *During 2017 we developed a workforce plan for the Department, strengthened our staffing in key areas of need and continued our support for implementation of the Civil Service Renewal Plan.*



## 2. 2017 in Review

A calendar review of 2017 activities identifies many highlights in the work of the Department:

In **January** Minister Zappone announced the publication of the Heads of Bill for the Affordable Childcare Scheme. The Scheme was announced as part of Budget 2017, and aims to make childcare more accessible for families, by providing universal subsidies for all children under 3 and targeted subsidies, based on net parental income, for children up to 15 years.

In **February** the Minister announced funding of €5.1m in order to develop new innovative services to care for children and disadvantaged young people. An expansion to the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Scheme to support children with disabilities to enter childcare, with the appointment of additional experts to support children, was also announced.

In **March** we ceased the practice of detaining children in adult prisons by providing that all young males under the age of 18 who are sentenced to a period of detention by the courts would be sent to Oberstown. Minister Zappone announced €4m to improve childcare services and €3m to support the provision of services aimed at school-going children. There was additional funding of €1.5m to support services for victims of sexual, domestic and gender based violence.

In **April** the Minister announced that a full review of the Child Care Act 1991 would be undertaken by the Department to ensure that children in crisis are given supports, protections and a voice in their future. The Minister also announced the extension of the €8.25m scheme to provide free childcare to under 5-year olds living in emergency accommodation to nine other regions outside Dublin. A 10% increase in funding was announced for small local youth clubs. €2m in funding was earmarked for the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to support their work with children and young people; and the Minister confirmed €4.5m to secure the continuation of 13 Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programmes that play a crucial role in combatting child poverty.

In **May** Minister Zappone announced that 500-600 children leaving care each year after reaching the age of 18 would have the right to an aftercare plan from 1st September 2017. This aftercare plan will identify required supports. The Minister updated the Seanad on implementation of the Second Interim Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters.

In **June** the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) higher education programme for early years practitioners, won the award for 'Best Online Learning Experience' at the 2017 Education Awards ceremony. From September 2017, graduates from the first intake performed a new leadership role of Inclusion Coordinator within their pre-school setting, resulting in an increase of €2 per child per week in the rate of ECCE capitation payable. The Minister increased the supports available to childcare providers in the form of a 'non-contact time payment' by €3.5 million to €18 million.

In **July** the Minister published an Implementation Plan for Tusla following the publication of Dr. Geoffrey Shannon's report on how An Garda Síochána use their emergency powers where children are at risk (application of section 12 of the Child Care Act 1991). The

Minister announced an extension of childcare provision for families who are homeless to include all children aged 12 and under for the summer months and all future school holidays. Minister Zappone also announced €8.4m in capital funding for 683 pre-school providers nationwide, an increase in €4.4m over 2017. This provided for more than 2,200 new childcare places, maintenance and building work as well as outdoor play areas. The Minister also announced that 1,500 community youth groups would benefit from a €4m in capital funding for equipment.

In **August** the Minister announced that an Independent Review of the Cost of Delivering Quality Childcare would be undertaken in order to inform future Government investment in childcare. The Minister announced the funding of 5,000 extra childcare spaces for school age children as well as an increase in capital funding for school age childcare of 33% to €4m. The childcare awareness campaign ‘It Starts Now’ was also launched to inform parents of €19m in extra supports for families.

In **September** the Minister announced that more than 1,700 community youth groups would benefit from a €6.35m equipment fund. The money was made available to allow clubs buy valuable equipment in order to support their work with young people.

In **October** the Department secured a 5.7% increase in funding for services to support children, young people and families in Budget 2018. The €73m package secured much-needed additional resources for Tusla, provided for a full second year of the ECCE free pre-school scheme and for enhanced quality measures for inspections and sustainability. It also recognised the importance of improved conditions for the early years’ workforce. The Minister signed the Commencement Order to give effect to the provisions in the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017. Its primary purpose was to give effect to Article 42A (Children) of the Constitution, in so far as it relates to adoption.

In **November** the Minister launched the ‘*So, how was school today?*’ report, a ground breaking piece of research carried out by young people for young people. The Minister welcomed the publication of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children and Youth Affairs’ report on the provision of foster care services in Ireland. She launched Hub na nÓg, a National Centre of Excellence which ensures that children and young people have a voice in decisions made about their individual and collective lives in their communities, in education, on their health and wellbeing and in legal settings. This was a priority action in the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Decision-Making 2015-2020.

In **December** the Minister commenced all remaining provisions of the Children First Act 2015, including the provisions in relation to mandatory reporting of child abuse and placing a legal obligation on organisations providing services to children to prepare and publish a Child Safeguarding Statement. The Third Interim Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes was published. The Minister announced an Early Years and School Age Childcare Capital Funding Programme of €6.8m for outdoor play areas, extra spaces and essential maintenance in childcare services. The Minister also announced the details of approximately 1,600 youth projects and groups that were awarded grants under the €6.35m Local Youth Club Equipment Scheme.

In summary, 2017 was a very busy and productive year for the Department. There were numerous policy and legislative initiatives with the objective of ensuring that the lives of children and young people were improved. The work of the Department also required staff to

discharge the full range of responsibilities of a Government Department in supporting the work of the Minister and the Government, and in discharging financial and other accountability objectives to the Oireachtas.

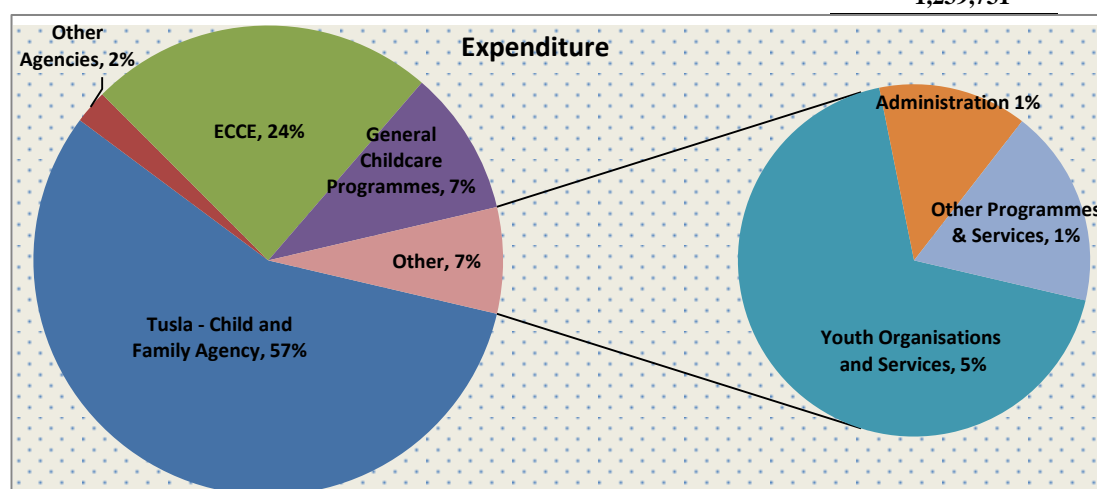
Part 2 of our Annual Report summarises the progress achieved during 2017 in respect of each of the objectives as set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy. These objectives are reflected in the annual Business Plans of relevant Units in the Department.

## Part 2: Progress Achieved in 2017

### Finance

The gross funding provision for the Department under Vote 40 in 2017 was just over €1.3 billion which represented an increase of €173 million, or 16%, over 2016 funding levels. The actual expenditure incurred by the Department and its agencies in 2017 was slightly over €1.26 billion, resulting in €52 million being returned to the Exchequer at the end of the year. The expenditure in 2017 enabled a significant level of services to be delivered across three programme areas as follows:

Outturn	
€000	
Programmes	
A	Children and Family Support
	739,591
B	Sectoral Programmes for Children and Young People
	499,123
C	Policy and Legislation
	22,041
<b>Gross expenditure</b>	
<b>1,260,755</b>	
<b>Deduct</b>	
D	Appropriations-in-aid
	21,024
<b>Net expenditure</b>	
<b>1,239,731</b>	



Details of initiatives taken in 2017 under each of the three Programme headings are set out in the sections below.

## **Programme A: *Children and Family Support***

### ***Introduction***

This programme is designed to support and improve the existing service delivery arrangements and to protect and support the welfare of children, young people and families, including the oversight of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

### ***Tusla, the Child and Family Agency***

#### **Funding**

Tusla was allocated funding of €712.9 million in 2017, an increase of 5.5% over 2016. The additional resources facilitated Tusla to progress a number of key developments including the recruitment of additional social workers and other staff to continue to address the issue of unallocated cases; to support Tusla in implementing key elements of the Government's National Strategy on Homelessness; to support the commissioning of new special care facilities; to develop an enhanced response to the issue of domestic, sexual and gender based violence and to start to support Tusla in its key role in implementing a range of important legislation, regarding Children First, Adoption and Aftercare.

#### **Governance and Performance Oversight**

The Department has a strong governance and accountability framework in place as part of its oversight of Tusla. The Department engaged closely with Tusla on compliance with governance matters with reference to its respective statutory obligations as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016.

The Department engages with Tusla in relation to performance through a range of measures and actions by way of monthly performance reviews. The Department meets on a monthly basis with the Tusla senior management team to discuss progress on priorities and the Minister also meets on a quarterly basis with the Chairperson, Chief Executive and Chief Operations Officer to review performance. In addition the Secretary General meets with the Chief Executive Officer on a monthly basis.

#### **Children First**

The Children First Act 2015 provides for a number of key child protection measures, including raising awareness of child abuse and neglect, providing for reporting and management of child protection concerns, and improving child protection arrangements in organisations providing services to children. The Act also removed the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in relation to corporal punishment.

All remaining provisions of the Act were commenced on 11 December, 2017. These included:

- (i) Mandated reporting of child abuse by defined categories of persons; and,

- (ii) Obligations on organisations providing services to children to keep children safe from harm, and to prepare and publish Child Safeguarding Statements.

During 2017, the Department engaged with Tusla to prepare for the full implementation of the Act. This included participation in the Tusla Readiness Working Group, a dedicated working group that worked to ensure maximum readiness of Tusla processes for the commencement of the remaining provisions of the legislation. The Department fully revised and published Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children which was launched by the Minister on 2 October 2017, and has been circulated widely. The Department also worked closely with Tusla in making available a range of resources, which included an E-Learning training module on Children First, to support and assist all sectors in implementing the legislation.

### **Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group (CFIDIG)**

The Department continued to work closely with the statutory CFIDIG during 2017, which ensures that all necessary preparations and supports are in place for those persons and organisations covered under the Act. This Group includes representatives from every Government Department, the HSE, Tusla and An Garda Síochána. A particular focus of the CFIDIG was to develop a consistent approach across Departments to ensure quality child protection in the agencies and services funded by Departments.

### **Department of Children and Youth Affairs - Children First Oversight Group**

The Department's Children First Oversight Group, set up to ensure compliance within the Department with the obligations imposed under the Children First Act 2015, continued preparations across all Divisions of the Department for full commencement of the Act. As with the CFIDIG, a particular focus for this Group was to develop a consistent approach across all Divisions of the Department, to quality assure child protection in the agencies, sectors and services funded by the Department.

### **Special Rapporteur on Child Protection**

The 2016 Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, the 10<sup>th</sup> such report, was received and disseminated to all relevant Government Departments for appropriate action in relation to the recommendations contained therein. The report was presented to Government in November 2017 and published in December 2017.

### **Child Protection Agenda of the Health Sector of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC)**

The Department continued to participate in the cross border child protection officials group. This group, which is under the auspices of the health agenda of the North South Ministerial Council was established to co-operate on a range of child protection matters.

### **Review of the Child Care Act 1991**

In 2017, the Department commenced the public consultation process in the context of the review of the Child Care Act 1991. The Department held a very useful Open Policy Debate in September, where the implementation of the current Act was discussed with reference to three key themes:

supporting families and children, listening to the voice of children, and inter-agency work. Participants included representatives of Tusla, service providers, academics, experts, advocacy groups, legal professionals, officials and inter-agency forums. In December the Department launched a written consultation process seeking the views of the public and relevant stakeholders on how best to review and reform the Child Care Act 1991.

### **Guardians *ad litem* reform**

Work continued on significant reform of the Guardian *ad litem* system. The overall objective is to ensure that the Guardian *ad litem* service can be provided to benefit the greatest number of children and young people, so that their voices can be heard in child care proceedings and that this service will be of high quality and sustainable into the future.

The Government originally approved publication of the General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill in January 2017, which was referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee (JOC) on Children and Youth Affairs for pre-legislative scrutiny. The Committee provided the Minister with its recommendations in May 2017. In December 2017, the Government agreed to the establishment of a new Guardian *ad litem* service within an executive office of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. At the end of 2017 a revised General Scheme was being prepared for Government Approval. This will also address the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee.

### **Aftercare: Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015**

The Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 was commenced with effect from 1 September, 2017. The Act places a statutory obligation on Tusla to prepare an aftercare plan for eligible children and adults.

### **Special Care**

The provisions of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011 allowing for the introduction of a transparent legal framework for special care came into effect at the turn of the year. The required Regulations and Standards (under the Health Act 2007) have also been completed and are now in effect.

### **Children's Residential Centres Transfer Project**

All children's residential services are currently inspected against the 2003 National Standards for Children's Residential Centres made under the Child Care Act, 1991. HIQA currently inspects Tusla-run children centres and foster care services. Tusla registers and inspects privately run children's residential services.

A project team comprising members from Tusla, HIQA and DCYA has been working to facilitate the transfer of the registration and inspection of Children's Residential Centres from Tusla to HIQA. Registration Regulations and Care and Welfare Regulations have been drafted and are now at an advanced stage. HIQA have completed the drafting of relevant standards for Ministerial approval.

### **International Matters**

Regular meetings continue with Tusla and the Department of Justice and Equality, regarding the operation of a procedures protocol in relation to interjurisdictional applications for social reports, and consent to the placement of children in care. This protocol falls under Council Regulation (EC) No. 2201/2003 concerning jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in matrimonial matters and matters of parental responsibility (“Brussels II bis”). The protocol was agreed between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Justice and Equality and Tusla.

The Department has engaged with the EU on Guardians for Unaccompanied Minors and work continues on establishing a common framework for this cohort of young people entering the EU.

### **Child Care Law Reporting Project**

The Child Care Law Reporting Project was drawing to a close as we approached the end of 2017 and expressions of interest were sought for a new project to cover the years from 2018 to 2020. Seven expressions of interest were received. Preparatory work in relation to the assessment of any potential submissions and the mechanism by which a new project might be funded, were well advanced at year end.

### **HIQA Statutory Investigation**

The Minister directed the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) to carry out a statutory investigation into Tusla’s management of referrals of child sexual abuse, including retrospective cases. The terms of reference for the investigation were published in April 2017.

### **Inspections**

HIQA is authorised to inspect services provided by Tusla child welfare and protection services, foster care and Tusla-run Children Residential Centres. The Department received the results of 44 HIQA inspections in 2017, which comprised inspections of 27 Children’s Residential Centres and 17 Foster Care Services. In addition, Tusla submitted the results of 65 Private and Voluntary Children’s Residential Centre inspections. The National Review Panel and the Ombudsman for Children also published reports. Tusla publishes an annual review of its statutory responsibilities, entitled the Review of Adequacy, which is analysed in conjunction with reports from the Ombudsman for Children and the National Review Panel, to identify trends, to inform policy and budget allocation, to allow for international comparison, and to identify service areas for improvement. This analysis was and continues to be used to support the work of the Department, including informing estimates discussions, workforce planning, and policy.

### **Commissioning**

Throughout 2017, Tusla worked closely with stakeholders in regard to its commissioning approach. In 2017 Tusla expanded its commissioning approach to a number of areas following a successful pilot in six areas in 2016. Statements developed for the areas set out the following: services required in an area and how they are required to be provided, current services available, what is not available and what needs to be available, and what services might be required in the future.



### **Farrelly Commission & Disclosures Tribunal**

The Department has fully co-operated with both the Farrelly Commission and the Disclosures Tribunal.

### **Educational Welfare Service**

Under its Educational Welfare Service, Tusla seeks to ensure that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education. The educational welfare service of Tusla, comprising Educational Welfare Officers, the School Completion Programme and the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, are key supports for children at risk of educational disadvantage.

In 2016/2017 some 5,939 referrals were screened by Educational Welfare Officers relating to general school attendance, placement issues, and serious school attendance issues during the reporting period. This led to work being carried out with 3,522 children/young people new to the service provided in 2016/2017.

The School Completion Programme (SCP) and the Home School Community Liaison Scheme are preventive programmes. The School Completion Programme provides targeted supports to approximately 37,000 children throughout the country, including both universal and targeted provision. The aim is to enhance the engagement of children in education and school life. The Minister is now considering proposals for reform of the programme, drawing on work done by Tusla and other stakeholders.

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme, with 420 posts serving DEIS schools, aims to build positive links between families, schools and local communities to support children's learning and educational outcomes. In the 2016/2017 school year Home School Community Liaison Coordinators provided targeted supports to over 45,000 parents. Over 55,500 parents/families attended activities and events organised by the Scheme.

### **The National Child Care Information System (NCCIS)**

In 2017 the Department provided capital funding to support the continued development and roll-out of the NCCIS system. Tusla received approval from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, on foot of expert NCCIS Peer Review Group advice to advance the development and roll-out of the system. Tusla progressed the development of the necessary software and the system was rolled out to 7 of Tusla's 17 areas by the end of December 2017.

### **Domestic Sexual and Gender-based Violence (DSGBV) Services**

In 2017 Tusla allocated funding of €22.1m to Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services, an increase of €1.5m over 2016. Throughout 2017 Tusla worked with partners in service provider organisations to implement obligations under the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and the Second National Strategy for Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services (2016 – 2021). This included the review of education and training requirements, the provision of support services,

specialist support services and refuges, and advancing progress in the development of a comprehensive dataset for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services.

### **Family Resource Centres**

In 2017, Tusla allocated core funding of €13.51m to the Family Resource Centre Programme. Additional funding of €2.12m was allocated on a once off basis to support centres to purchase equipment and carry out minor capital works.

In 2017, Tusla also provided funding of approximately €5.9 million to support organisations providing counselling services. The majority of these services are voluntary and they offer a range of counselling and support services to children and families.

### **The Irish Refugee Protection Programme**

The Department continued to engage closely with the Department of Justice and Equality, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) and Tusla, on the relocation of unaccompanied minors as part of its role under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, which included the Calais Special Project. Over the course of 2017, 30 children were relocated to Ireland through this project.

### **Direct Provision**

The Department is represented on the Interdepartmental Working Group (IDG), chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality, which is developing a set of standards for Direct Provision. The Department is focusing on the standards relating to children and has assisted in the development of governance standards.

The Department also participated in the Taskforce on the Supreme Court judgement on the right to work for international protection applicants, which reported to Government with a recommendation to opt into the EU Reception Conditions Directive, which includes articles on families, children and unaccompanied minors.

The Department held meetings with stakeholders to discuss the current environment for unaccompanied minors, and attended sessions and workshops where young people who had lived in Direct Provision shared their experiences. The Department also met with stakeholders to complete the response to a recommendation from the Mahon Report on the international protection process in Ireland.

### ***Youth Justice***

#### **Ending of practice of detaining children in adult prison**

The Minister signed the necessary orders, with effect from 31 March 2017, under the Children (Amendment) Act 2015 to end the practice of detaining 17-year-old boys in adult prison facilities. Now all children who have been sentenced to a period of detention by the courts are accommodated in Oberstown Children Detention Campus, and St. Patrick's Institution has been closed.

### **Launch of the Bail Supervision Scheme**

In June 2017, the Minister launched the Bail Supervision Scheme (BSS) on a pilot basis. The pilot is for an initial 2 year period during which time a review and evaluation will be conducted to determine the future of the scheme. The scheme provides a court with the option to grant bail to a child, rather than detaining the child, during remand proceedings with conditions set by the court. By maintaining a number of young people in the community on the Bail Supervision Scheme there is a reduction in the need for detention places. This approach is also in keeping with the key principle of the Children Act 2001 that the detention of a child should only be imposed as a last resort.

### **Setting up of the REPPP (Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice)**

The Department established the Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP) Project which responds directly to objectives identified in the *Tackling Youth Crime – Youth Justice Action Plan, 2014-2018*, in particular the need to significantly improve the evidence base to inform policy and programme and practice decision-making in the area of youth justice.

Work underway through the REPPP in 2017 included:

- a study of the data used in different jurisdictions to assess the effectiveness of youth justice systems;
- development of a bespoke approach to Systematic Evidence Review of existing literature, which can be used to help address a wide range of policy questions; and
- development of a model of interventions to address the involvement of children in criminal networks, (funded by the Department of Justice and Equality).

### ***Youth Community Programmes (Department of Justice and Equality)***

The Community Programmes Unit is staffed by officials from the Department of Justice and Equality and is co-located with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

### **Youth Crime**

The *Tackling Youth Crime: Youth Justice Action Plan 2014–2018* commits to achieving better outcomes for children and young people who require targeted, strategic attention because their behaviour has led to their involvement in the youth justice system. The focus of the Plan is to continue the downward trends in crime and in turn to reduce the necessity for detention.

The Plan aims to create a safer society by working in partnership to reduce youth offending through appropriate interventions and linkages to services. The Action Plan sets out a number of specific goals and objectives towards delivering better outcomes for children who get into trouble with the law, and reducing crime to make communities safer. Implementation of the Plan is overseen by the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS), with the assistance of an inter-agency Implementation Team including the Department of Justice and Equality, An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service, Oberstown, the Irish Prison Service and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

IYJS oversees a significant investment in community-based programmes to divert young people from further involvement in criminal or anti-social behaviour.

In 2017 approximately €12 million was allocated by the Department of Justice and Equality to IYJS to support Garda Youth Diversion Projects, and a number of other youth diversion community-based projects. In addition the Probation Service allocated approximately €5 million to support the operation of Young Persons Probation Projects.

### **Youth Community Programmes (DJE)**

New projects were progressed in 2017 through the Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP) project, described above.

## **Programme B: Sectoral Programmes for Children and Young People**

### ***Introduction***

The aim of this Programme is to continue to support the provision of both universal and targeted services for the care, development and wellbeing of children and young people. Budgetary allocations for 2017 meant that the Department:

- provided an additional €86 million in respect of the full year costs of the extended ECCE scheme and the roll out of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) in ECCE first announced in Budget 2016;
- provided a further €35.5 million for a range of measures to address affordability and quality in the early years schemes.

Childcare related expenditure in 2017 was €427 million, which represented an increase of €120.5 million (39%) on actual expenditure in 2016.

### **The Affordable Childcare Scheme**

The development of the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) gathered pace in 2017. The Childcare Support Bill, the legal infrastructure underpinning the new scheme, was published in December 2017. Significant progress was made on the governance, communications, data protection and IT components of the Scheme. The ACS will provide financial support to parents towards the cost of childcare. It will provide a system from which both universal and targeted subsidies can be provided towards the cost of childcare.

The Scheme will replace the existing targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme and will include “wraparound” care for pre-school and school-age children. Once launched, this scheme will:

- improve outcomes for children;
- reduce poverty;
- facilitate labour activation; and,

- tangibly reduce the cost of childcare for tens of thousands of families.

### **ECCE and Other Childcare Supports**

A series of new and enhanced measures to make childcare more affordable for families in Ireland was introduced in September 2017. These included the introduction of a new, universal subsidy for children between six months of age up to when they commence the ECCE programme (c.3 years of age) valued at up to €20 per week (€1,040 per annum) and the considerable enhancement (by as much as 50%) of targeted subventions for lower income families or those seeking to engage in employment or training.

By end of 2017, registrations for the above programmes (including TEC) had reached 67,785 children. 31,611 were benefitting from the introduction of the new universal subsidy for children under three and 36,174 children were receiving the enhanced targeted subventions of up to €145 per week for children up to 15 years of age.

The expanded ECCE programme had 89,100 children registered in December 2017. Although the primary purpose of this programme is the social and educational development of children, for families whose children attend full or part time day care, the programme also had a positive effect in lowering the cost of childcare during 2017. This was estimated at over €4,000 per child.

### **Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)**

AIM is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with a disability can access and meaningfully participate in the ECCE programme. AIM was launched in June 2016 and is administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department.

Implementation of AIM is ongoing with 2,486 children receiving 4,760 targeted supports across 1,283 settings in the 2016/2017 ECCE programme year. Universal AIM supports have reached many multiples of this number of children. In autumn 2017, 847 pre-school practitioners graduated from a new higher education programme to foster inclusive practice in pre-schools, called Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years Programme (LINC).

### **The National Síolta/Aistear Initiative**

The National Síolta/Aistear Initiative (a curricular and quality framework initiative) which commenced in 2016, continued to support the wider implementation and rollout of both the Síolta and Aistear frameworks, including the development of material, resources and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Early Years practitioners. The Department of Education and Skills works in partnership with DCYA and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on this initiative, with two national Coordinators overseeing the work of Síolta Aistear mentors, who are drawn from a range of organisations. Capacity building of the Síolta Aistear Mentors, through informal and formal supports such as training and CPD, continued through the piloting of Aistear CPD and coaching of 400 practitioners in 162 settings in 2017. Revision and development of resources, as well as updating and ongoing development of the Aistear Síolta practice guide website, was completed in 2017. In addition, a central information management system and reporting

procedure for organisations involved in the initiative was established.

### **Early Years Capital Programme**

The Early Years Capital Programme 2017 provided €8.4 million to 690 childcare services for essential maintenance of facilities, new natural outdoor play areas and the creation of 2,200 new childcare places.

### **Other Funding**

€18 million was provided to the Early Years sector in respect of Programme Support Payments to contribute towards the administrative costs associated with the provision of DCYA funded programmes.

### **Governance and Oversight**

The Department established the Early Years Finance Governance and Reform Unit to ensure accountability for public funds while addressing the need to make childcare accessible, affordable and of a high quality. The Department is committed to improving the quality and standards of early years services through various initiatives including inspection, audit and mentoring. Early years inspection, audit and mentoring functions performed on behalf of DCYA span across multiple organisations, including the Early Years Inspectorate at Tusla, the Early Years Inspectorate at the Department of Education and Skills, Pobal, Better Start and the National Quality Development Service.

These organisations along with Department officials ensured that the inspection, audit and mentoring functions were carried out effectively and avoided unnecessary administrative burden or disruption to early years services – while at the same time ensuring appropriate levels of transparency and accountability.

To this end an Operations and Systems Alignment Group (OSAG) chaired by DCYA continued to ensure a strategic approach to developing systems and managing operations that supported the efficient and effective delivery of inspection, audit and mentoring functions across the early years sector.

### **Pobal**

Pobal provides assistance to a number of areas within the Department, particularly the Early Years Division. The most significant role provided by Pobal has related to the administration of early years programmes and schemes, including the disbursement of programme funding and the performance of a related compliance function.

A new overarching Service Level Agreement was signed with Pobal in September 2017 in relation to its role in administering childcare schemes on behalf of the Department. This is supplemented with an agreed Programme of Work and by individual Programme Agreements. These agreements formalise improved provisions regarding oversight arrangements and corporate governance requirements; specify the high-level services to be delivered to the Department over the year; and outline a reporting framework and development roadmap.

Significant effort was invested in identifying and addressing compliance and governance issues in the Early Years sector. A Compliance Service Offer was advanced with Pobal which aligned resources to support and enforce good governance and accountability in the Early Years sector.

## ***Youth***

### **The National Youth Strategy, 2015-2020**

In 2017 the Department continued to work with the Youth constituency of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (BOBF) Advisory Council to match National Youth Strategy outcomes to the Advisory Council work plan to ensure the continued implementation of the strategy.

### **Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETB Ireland)**

In 2017 the Department entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with ETB Ireland. Service Level Agreements were also put in place between the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) who are the funding intermediaries for the Department and the DCYA funded youth projects.

### **The National Quality Standards Framework Review**

During 2017 the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Youth Work was reviewed. A consultation process was carried out with a range of stakeholder groups - ETBs, youth organisations, youth projects, young people and other relevant organisations. An environmental scan of comparative practices informed the review. The final review report was completed in October 2017 and has been forwarded to the National Quality Standards Implementation Group (NQSIG), for publication on the DCYA website. Recommendations from the review process will be incorporated into the scheme design for the new Targeted Youth Funding Scheme.

### **Incorporation of Volunteer Club Standards into the application process**

The revision of the quality standards process for volunteer led youth groups was also undertaken and implemented during 2017.

### **Local Youth Club Equipment Capital Scheme**

In September 2017 the Minister launched the Local Youth Club Equipment Capital Scheme. €6.35 million was made available to volunteer-led youth clubs for the purchase of equipment. Almost 1,600 youth projects and groups were awarded grants. The grants have assisted clubs in the purchase of camping, gaming, sports and audio visual equipment. The diverse range of the grants awarded was reflective of the clubs which applied and the young people who partake in their activities.

### **EU Engagement**

The Department continued to represent Ireland at the Youth Working Party in Brussels, which supports the work of the EU Council of Ministers for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport. Three sets of Council Conclusions were adopted during 2017 and a General Approach was agreed by the Council in relation to the European Solidarity Corps Regulation.

### **North/South Cooperation**

As one of the accountable Departments for the Children and Young People's component of the PEACE IV programme, DCYA contributed to the selection of ten projects which will serve to improve the lives of young people in Northern Ireland and in the border region.

The Department continued to fulfil its North-South Education and Training Standards (NSETS) committee responsibilities. A review of NSETS took place in 2017, with a view to finalising its terms of reference and financial procedures.

### **Compliance Team**

A new compliance unit was established in the Youth Affairs Unit in 2017 to improve governance and financial oversight of youth funding programmes.

### **Youth Reform**

The Department established a Youth Reform Unit in June 2017 to reform youth funding schemes for the benefit of young people. The Youth Reform Unit has prioritised the design of a single targeted funding scheme that is an amalgamation of four youth funding schemes. To date, this ongoing substantial programme of reform has involved multiple work packages including:

- a mapping exercise in conjunction with Pobal that mapped all targeted youth projects with reference to demographic and deprivation data. The map can be viewed online at the following link: <https://maps.pobal.ie/WebApps/DCYA/index.html>
- funding approved for 16 targeted youth projects under the sample projects scheme. The Youth Reform section has engaged with Education and Training Boards in a learning and development process in relation to these projects to inform the design of the new scheme.
- In 2017 consultations in relation to the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes project (VFMPR) were held with approximately 500 stakeholders including young people.
- The Youth Reform Unit also completed preliminary review activities in relation to the Youth Services Grant Scheme in 2017.

### **Participation**

The second annual report on the implementation of the actions contained in the Participation Strategy was launched by the Minister in November 2017. All government departments and agencies are actively progressing 77 of the 94 agreed actions for 2017, with 82% of the agreed actions reaching completion or in progress. The actions not yet commenced were included in the 2018 Action Plan.

### **Hub na nÓg**

Hub na nÓg was launched in November 2017. Its mission is to be a centre of excellence and support Government Departments, State agencies and non-government organisations in giving children and young people a voice in decision-making impacting on their individual and collective every-day lives, with a particular focus on seldom-heard children and young people.

In 2017, Hub na nÓg, which is led by DCYA, worked with children and young people on a wide



range of initiatives, such as the National Standards for Oberstown Children Detention Campus, Adoption Regulations, the design of the Heritage Council Strategy, the impact of Brexit on the lives of young people, and Cruinniú, which is an initiative of Creative Ireland. Hub na nÓg also provided training to Sport Ireland.

Funding from the Comhairle na nÓg Development fund of €250,000, which is administered by Pobal on behalf of DCYA, was awarded to 31 local authorities in 2017 to assist in the continued support and development of Comhairle na nÓg.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive completed their two year term on the theme of Equality in School. The *So, How was school today?* report developed by the Executive was launched by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the Minister for Education and Skills in November 2017.

Dáil na nÓg took place on 6 December in Croke Park with over 300 Comhairle members in attendance. The theme for Dáil na nÓg was Equality ‘In all fairness.....’ and young people voted on Equality in Schools as their chosen topic. A new National Executive was elected and they will work on this theme over the next two years.

DCYA has also participated on the Creative Youth Strategy and has committed to actions on the implementation of Creative Ireland.

### **LGBTI+**

Work on the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy commenced in February 2017, with the establishment of an oversight committee with an independent chairperson. The development of the strategy progressed throughout the year. A public consultation took place with stakeholders and with almost 4000 young people participating in events across the country. The report of consultations for the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy was launched at a major event to celebrate the lives of LGBTI+ young people in December 2017, including a Facebook live event.

### **Quality Capacity and Building Initiative (QCBI)**

The Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) is currently being developed to implement a nationwide co-ordinated approach to prevention and early intervention in Ireland. The QCBI will harness the learning from prevention and early intervention initiatives and actively support the use of this learning as a source and resource for planning, delivery and evaluation. It will aim to support the ability of policymakers, providers, and practitioners to apply evidence informed approaches in prevention and early intervention.

Throughout 2017 a number of consultations were held with experts in the fields of prevention and early intervention to further refine and develop the initiative. A QCBI Implementation Group was established to guide and support the development of QCBI with representatives from government departments, the BOBF Advisory Council and practitioners, academics and researchers associated with children, young people and family sectors.

In 2017 the Tusla-led Outcomes for Children National Data & Information Hub Project funded by the QCBI, was further advanced with the initial prototype developed, indicators identified, and data

uploaded onto the system. The Outcomes for Children data hub aims to incrementally build a centralised data hub that will host a wide range of published data that can be utilised and analysed by policy makers and service providers.

## **Programme C: Policy & Legislation**

### ***Introduction***

The aim of this programme is to oversee key areas of policy, legislation and inter-sectoral collaboration to improve the lives and well-being of children and young people.

### ***Legislation***

The Department progressed a comprehensive package of legislation in 2017. These are summarised below.

- The General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill, which will reform Guardian *ad litem* arrangements, was progressed.
- The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 was commenced in October 2017. This Act gave effect to Article 42A (Children) of the Constitution, as it relates to adoption.
- The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 passed second stage in the Seanad.
- Regulations regarding (i) fees for extracts from the Adopted Children Register and Register of Gender Recognition of Inter-country Adoption, (ii) revised consent forms and pre-consultation procedure forms following commencement of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 were drafted and signed.
- The practice of detaining 17-year-old boys in adult prison facilities was ended with the signing by the Minister of the necessary orders under the Children (Amendment) Act 2015.
- Relevant provisions of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015, placing a statutory obligation on Tusla to provide an aftercare plan for eligible children and adults, were commenced with effect from September 2017.
- The provisions of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011, allowing for the introduction of a transparent legal framework for special care, came into effect at the turn of the year. The required sets of Regulations and Standards (under the Health Act 2007) have also been completed and are now in effect.
- The Childcare Support Bill, the legal infrastructure underpinning the Affordable Childcare Scheme, was published in December 2017.
- All remaining provisions of the Children First Act were commenced in December 2017. These remaining provisions included the mandatory reporting of child abuse and obligations on organisations providing services to children to keep them safe from harm.
- The Department also commenced the public consultation process as part of the review of the

Child Care Act 1991. An Open Policy Debate on the implementation of the current Act was held in September 2017 and a written consultation process was launched in December.

### ***Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures***

A whole of Government approach is a key element of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020*. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has responsibility for coordinating the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (BOBF), but individual commitments remain the responsibility of relevant Departments.

Implementation of BOBF continued across Government in line with the Implementation Plan (2014 – 2017). All elements of the implementation infrastructure continued to meet regularly. Children and young people continued to be engaged in the process. Progress on implementation is described in detail in the Third Annual Report on BOBF, published in September 2017.

In September 2017, DCYA commenced a mid-term review of BOBF. The review aims to focus on the status of the framework and the progress made towards its implementation, while offering learning to inform the next phase of the implementation process from 2018 – 2020.

The Advisory Council for BOBF developed a workplan in 2017 containing priority areas for progression. These areas include child poverty, homelessness, education, mental health and well-being, human rights and equality, prevention and early intervention, development and implementation of constituent strategies, including the Early Years Strategy and the National Youth Strategy, and the implications for children and young people of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

The Department also worked with stakeholders during the BOBF Mid-Term Review process. It engaged with them on a regular basis including circulation of a survey across government and the non-governmental sector. The Department continued to develop the BOBF ezine to keep stakeholders abreast of developments. The Department worked with officials across Government to advance the priorities included in the Advisory Council's workplan.

The Children and Young People's Policy Consortium represents the keystone in the implementation infrastructure for BOBF. The Consortium is tasked with overseeing and driving the effective implementation of BOBF within their respective spheres of responsibility, across departments, agencies and sectors. The interdepartmental Sponsors Group identified and advanced a number of areas to be progressed as key priorities under BOBF:

- Department of Health: child obesity
- Department of Education and Skills: review of DEIS
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs: prevention and early intervention
- Department of Social Protection: child poverty
- Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government: homelessness

### **Children's Rights Alliance**

The Department allocated funding to the Children's Rights Alliance in 2017 to assist the Alliance with their agreed 2017 work programme. The Alliance assisted the Department with the development of work on amendments to the Child Care Act 1991, and reforms to the Guardian Ad Litem service. The Alliance advanced its agreed work plan with the Department which focuses on the following priorities in 2017: child poverty, child homelessness, mental health, early years, Brexit and children's rights and equality.

### **Children and Young People's Service Committees (CYPSCs)**

Early in 2017, the full national roll out of Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) was achieved, bringing the total number of CYPSC to 27, with 26 local CYPSC co-ordinators and 1 National Co-Ordinator for CYPSC in place and under the employment of Tusla. Through their work in local areas, the CYPSC aim to realise the five national outcomes set out in BOBF and in 2017 various projects were undertaken by CYPSC nationwide relating to these national outcomes. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2017 between DCYA and Tusla to ensure that there is a mechanism in place to support the CYPSC initiative and oversee the financial resourcing of CYPSC.

All CYPSC develop a 3 year plan outlining their priority actions under the five National Outcomes of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, based on a needs analysis done in their own local areas. In line with their local plans, CYPSC undertook various projects in 2017 under the five National Outcomes.

In August 2017, DCYA supported the Healthy Ireland Initiative led by the Department of Health, in co-funding CYPSC nationwide to progress projects from their local plans that link with the Healthy Ireland Framework. Each CYPSC received approximately €38,000 towards their Healthy Ireland projects, and in 11 instances a joint CYPSC and Local Community and Development Committee (LCDC) proposal was advanced, illustrating the strong alignment between both structures and further promoting inter-agency working. Examples of Healthy Ireland projects undertaken by CYPSC include: Smoking Cessation Programmes; Community Action on Alcohol; Think about Alcohol for Secondary Schools; Sexual Health and Well Being programmes; Healthy Eating and Lifestyle programmes; Blazing Saddle Cycling and Learn to Cycle Initiatives; Swimming Lessons and Swimming 4 Fun; One Million Step challenge and Let's Get Walking initiatives.

### **Child Poverty**

Under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, an ad hoc group made up of officials from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, DCYA, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government worked with members of the Advisory Council to identify and advance initiatives to reduce child poverty. This ad hoc group produced a whole of Government paper identifying possible actions for reducing child poverty. The Advisory Council also produced a paper on behalf of non-governmental organisations. In June 2017 a roundtable event on child poverty was hosted by the Advisory Council and DCYA

which focused on recommendations to reduce child poverty and the whole of Government response that is required.

### **North East Inner City Initiative (NEIC)**

The North East Inner City Initiative (NEIC) arose from the Kieran Mulvey Report published in February 2017. The Report identified four priority areas for Dublin's North East Inner City: tackling crime and drugs, maximising educational/training opportunities and creating local employment, creating an integrated system of social services, and improving the physical landscape in the area. The NEIC Initiative outlined the actions that should be taken to aid with the regeneration of the area.

A subgroup chaired by DCYA was established in 2017 to address the priority area of creating an integrated system of social services. The subgroup is tasked with advancing a range of actions in the Mulvey Report. It aims to ensure the alignment of existing initiatives in order to achieve maximum impact in terms of integrated service delivery for children, young people and their families.

### **Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme**

The Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme is a prevention and early intervention initiative of DCYA and Atlantic Philanthropies. Its aim is to test and evaluate innovative prevention and early intervention approaches in areas of disadvantage and to improve outcomes for children and families. DCYA has engaged in the ongoing management of the programme as it comes to a close in its current format. In 2017, the Department initiated discussions to transition the ABC programme into Tusla to align it with Tusla's remit and work in Prevention and Early Intervention, and Family Support. An extension of the ABC programme to the end of 2017 was secured and work has begun to securing an extension into 2018, to allow for the finalisation of the national evaluation and to feed its findings into the design of a future programme of community-based Prevention and Early Intervention.

## ***Adoption***

### **Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017**

The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 was commenced on 19 October, 2017. The primary purpose of the Act is to give effect to Article 42A (Children) of the Constitution, in so far as it relates to adoption. In particular, the Act provides for –

- The adoption of any child, regardless of the marital status of his/her parents.
- The Adoption Authority of Ireland or the Court, to regard the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration.
- The Authority or the Court to ascertain the child's views and such views to be given due weight having regard to the age and maturity of the child.
- The introduction of revised criteria for dispensing with consent, in the case of the adoption of children whose parents fail in their duty towards them.
- The adoption of a child by his or her step parent without the requirement for the child's other parent to adopt his or her own child.
- The provision for the joint adoption of a child by civil partners and cohabiting couples.

- The further adoption of a child who was previously adopted.

### **The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016**

The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 passed second stage in the Seanad in May 2017. The primary purpose of the Bill is to provide for a scheme whereby adoption information, including the information required to obtain a birth certificate, may be provided to an adopted person subject to certain conditions.

The Bill provides for the Adoption Authority to have responsibility for the maintenance and safeguarding of all adoption records, and for providing access to records in accordance with the Bill. The Bill also provides that birth parents and other persons may obtain information about an adopted person, subject to the other party's consent. The Bill further provides that a person who may have been the subject of an 'informal care arrangement' or an 'incorrect registration' and a birth parent of that person, is entitled to apply for information under the Bill.

Regulations regarding (i) fees for extracts from the Adopted Children Register and Register of Gender Recognition of Inter-country Adoption, (ii) revised consent forms and pre-consultation procedure forms following commencement of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017, were drafted and signed in 2017.

### **The Adoption Authority of Ireland**

The Department engages with the Adoption Authority of Ireland through regular meetings and formalised reporting on governance matters with regard to its statutory obligations under the Adoption Act 2010 and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 (the Code). In 2017 the Department and the Adoption Authority of Ireland signed an oversight agreement as required in the Code.

### ***Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation***

The Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related matters) was supported to deliver on its terms of reference. The second and third interim reports of the Commission were published. An extension of one year (until February 2019) was agreed to facilitate the Commission to finalise its three reports.

The Minister hosted facilitated meetings with former residents and secured Government approval for the establishment of a Collaborative Forum to support and empower former residents.

A technical report was published on the options for managing the site of the former mother and baby home in Tuam, Co. Galway and for appropriately responding to the discovery of infant remains interred at this location.

## **Research & Evaluation**

In 2017, the Department managed and progressed *Growing Up in Ireland: the National Longitudinal Study of Children* (GUI) which, since 2006, has tracked two cohorts of children for the purposes of studying factors that contribute to or undermine, the well-being of children in contemporary Irish families. Outputs from 2017 include:

- The completion of the main survey for the Infant Cohort at 9 years of age.
- The completion of the instrumentation design and pilot survey for the Child Cohort at 20 years of age, and the proposed instrumentation for the main phase survey with this group.
- The publication of two new research reports from GUI: *Off to a Good Start? Primary School Experiences and the Transition to Second-level Education*; and *Understanding Use of GP Services among Children in Ireland*, along with a new set of Key Findings booklets in relation to the infant cohort at 7/8 years old.
- The completion of a number of knowledge transfer seminars.

The Department published *The State of the Nation's Children 2016* and *An indicator set for Better Outcomes Brighter Future* during 2017. *The State of the Nation's Children 2016* is the sixth edition in a biennial series that compiles data from a range of sources including government departments, agencies and research organisations to provide key information on the lives of children in areas such as health and education as well as social, emotional, behavioural and self-reported happiness outcomes. *An indicator set for Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*, presents a series of indicators compiled from a wide range of data sources, the purpose of which is to track progress for children and young people across the five national outcomes outlined in *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*.

In addition, proposals on a departmental data repository were developed during 2017 and a departmental data needs analysis progressed.

Evaluation supports were provided on a number of DCYA policies. These included the progression of a spending review of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, (for publication in 2018) and the development of a cost estimates report to help inform progress on a key DCYA policy reform. A focussed policy assessment of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme Higher Capitation Scheme was also advanced.

## **Evaluation Training Programme**

The Evaluation Training Programme was progressed during 2017, for piloting during 2018. This programme is part of the Goal Programme on Public Service Reform in Ireland and Northern Ireland and will provide a model for evaluation training across the Civil Service. In 2017, the project specifications were agreed, with a cross-Departmental working group established to help inform programme implementation.

There was consultation between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Department regarding the finalisation of the OECD 2017 publication, *Faces of*

*Joblessness in Ireland: Anatomy of Employment Barriers*, which examined childcare funding in Ireland in the context of potential barriers to employment.

## ***Corporate Governance***

### **Human Resources (HR) and Learning & Development**

A Workforce Planning Strategy 2017-2019 was completed in 2017. Among the outcomes was the establishment of a Business Support function to work pro-actively with units to support their workforce needs. This was in the context of the Department's workforce expansion, which continued in 2017 with 66 new hires starting during the year. 28 employees or over 10% of all staff were promoted through internal or external competitions. A number of specialist external recruitment competitions were also carried out to enhance the Department's skillset.

An External HR function was further developed in 2017 to support the Department's agencies with regard to HR matters, such as the development and support of their workforces and associated terms and conditions. The External HR function also supports the agencies' HR engagements with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Department's Learning and Development Unit continued to work with staff through the PMDS system in identifying their training and development needs. There was a significant increase in training investment and provision in 2017 in line with a growth in the Department's staff numbers. Training was provided in areas such as Information & Communications Technology (ICT) (soft skills), Project Management, Freedom of Information (FOI), Disability Awareness, and Irish and French language skills. The Department continued to support staff studying for qualifications in areas such as management, business studies, governance, law, auditing and leadership. During 2017 the Department continued to support the development of *One Learning*, the new shared model for delivering learning and development to the civil service. The first tranche of *One Learning's* training courses were rolled out in late 2017.

The Department has also professional social work advice available and at the end of 2017 was in the process of completing a recruitment process for two additional staff with expertise in this area to deepen the in-house knowledge in order to inform the development of policy and interdepartmental work.

### **Support Services**

The role of the Support Services Unit is to assist with the overall management of the day to day administrative supports necessary for the efficient running of the Department. This includes areas such as facilities management, including overall health and safety requirements and ICT infrastructure and supports. 2017 was a challenging year primarily with increasing staff numbers needing to be accommodated and delays in moving to the Department's new HQ building in Miesian Plaza.



Significant milestones achieved during 2017 included:

- engagement with the Office of Public Works and co-tenants relating to move to new location at Miesian Plaza;
- completion of procurement exercises to arrange for secure offsite file storage and upgrading of personal computers;
- the appointment of a Data Protection Officer in preparation for the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018; and,
- commencement of the recruitment process for the appointment of a Head of ICT at Principal Officer level.

### **Risk Management**

The Department's Risk Strategy aims to have proactive management-led behaviours and processes to help achieve our strategic and operational objectives. The Department's Governance Framework outlines the overall approach to Risk Management as part of the system of internal controls and business management. DCYA also maintains a centralised record of risks in a Risk Register. The Register is the primary tool for risk tracking, containing the most up-to-date overall system of risks and the status of any risk mitigation actions.

The full Management Board functions as the Department's Risk Committee. The Secretary General, as Accounting Officer, has ultimate responsibility for Risk Management as part of the system of internal controls. The Risk Committee met four times in 2017 for the purpose of:

- overseeing the system of Risk Management in the Department, and embedding Risk Management effectively;
- considering Corporate Risks and reviewing their ongoing management;
- reviewing reports detailing high scoring risks across MB areas, and considering whether mitigation and management measures are appropriate and adequate.

### **Governance of Bodies under the Aegis of the Department**

The relationship between Government Departments and bodies under their aegis is determined primarily by:

- the underpinning legislation establishing the body; and
- the requirements set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The public bodies funded through the Department's Vote and for which the Secretary General is the Accounting Officer, are as follows:

- the Child and Family Agency ('Tusla'), established in January 2014 under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013;
- the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI), established in November 2010 under the Adoption Act 2010;

- the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO), established in 2004 under the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002; and
- the children detention schools established under the Children Act 2001.

The Department also provides the primary source of funding for Gaisce, the President's Award. Gaisce is a limited company set up under the Companies Acts.

In general, the relationship between the Department and the respective bodies under its remit, including on governance matters, is managed by the relevant unit or division within the Department. This includes oversight of the functions of the body and the respective responsibilities of the Minister, Secretary General as Accounting Officer, Board and Chief Executive. It also involves all related parliamentary support to the Minister on matters relating to the governance of the body.

The relationship between the Department and those bodies under its aegis varies in terms of the nature of the work and scale of operation of each body and its governing legislation.

### **Internal Audit and Audit Committee**

The mission of the Department's Internal Audit Unit is to provide independent, objective assurance on the system of internal controls and consulting services designed to add value and improve the Department's operations. It helps the Department accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

The Department's Audit Committee has an independent role within the Department to oversee and advise on matters relating to the operation and development of the internal audit function and the business control, governance and risk management environment. The Committee met on five occasions during 2017 and it conducted a self-review of its effectiveness. The results of this review confirmed that it is discharging its functions in accordance with best practice.

Completed Internal Audit reports are circulated to the Secretary General, Management Board and the Audit Committee. In 2017 eight such reports were circulated to the Committee, and discussed at their meetings:

- Community Childcare Subvention Programme
- Affordable Childcare Scheme
- Transaction Audit
- Tusla Payments
- Youth Services Grant Scheme
- Review of Bank Reconciliations, Petty Cash Controls and Credit Card Controls
- Review of funding drawdown process and the control of expenditure process at Oberstown Campus and
- Desktop Review of DCYA's published Governance Arrangement.

Risk management is a standing item on the Audit Committee's agenda and some suggestions were

made to the Department's Risk Committee during the year. In the course of 2017 the Audit Committee sought and received presentations from the heads of a number of DCYA business units and in accordance with its Charter, met with the external audit team from the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

## Appendix I

### Associated key outputs and public service activities as published in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV)

Key High Level Metrics			2015 Output Outturn (2015 Output Target)	2016 Output Target	2017 Output Target
	Child and Family Agency	% of children across all care settings to have a care plan	90% (>90%)	>90%	>90%
	Safe and secure detention places	No. of safe and secure children detention school places provided	56 (75 – 90)	75-90	75-90
	Foster care	% of Approval rate for relative foster carers	76% (100%)	100%	100%
	Social Work Service	% of children who require a social work service who have an allocated social worker (Open Cases)	75% (>70)	>85%	>90%
Legislation			2015 Output Outturn	2016 Output Target	2017 Output Target
		Enacted Children First Bill. Enacted Child Care (Amendment) Bill. Enacted Children (Amendment) Bill.			
Publish Documents			2015 Output Outturn	2016 Output Target	2017 Output Target
		Eighth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection.	Ninth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection.	Tenth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection.	
Qualitative Statements of Outputs and Activities			2015 Output Outturn	2016 Output Target	2017 Output Target
	Child and Family Agency	Maintained and improved percentage of aftercare assessments offered to young people transitioning from care. Maintained and improved percentage of all children and young people in care engaged with an education service.	Maintain and improve percentage of aftercare assessments offered to young people transitioning from care. Maintain and improve percentage of all children and young people in care engaged with an education service.	Percentage of children and young people in care engaged with an education service: 6-15 incl. > 95% 16/17 > 90%	
	Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Services	Developed strategy and put in place a regional management structure to ensure a consistent approach to services in conjunction with other state and non-state service providers.	Put in place a regional management structure to ensure a consistent approach to services in conjunction with other state and non-state service providers.	Provide funding for some 60 services throughout the country to include: • 16 Rape Crisis Centres; • 20 services providing emergency refuge accommodation to women and children; • 24 community-based domestic violence services. Implementation of relevant actions in the 2nd National Strategy for DSGBV services in preparation for ratification for the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).	
	Aftercare services for care leavers	Ensured that young people leaving care have an aftercare plan in place and are assisted in accessing supports commensurate with their needs.	Ensure that young people leaving care have an aftercare plan in place and are assisted in accessing supports commensurate with their needs.	% of those eligible for an aftercare plan receiving an aftercare support: >90% (Commencement of legislation affecting this metric pending)	
	Safe and secure detention places		Complete transfer of responsibility to the Oberstown campus for detention of male children who are serving a sentence of detention, on foot of recruitment of new care staff.		
Context and Impact indicators					
			2014	2015	2016
1-	Number of children in care		6,463	6,388	6,329*
2-	Number of referrals for child welfare and protection		43,630	43,596	23,570**
3-	Number of open cases with Tusla assessed as needing a social work service (includes children in care)		27,651	26,655	25,362*
			*End Q3 2016		
			**End Q2 2016		

## **Appendix II**

### **Publications in 2017**

- Tackling Youth Crime: Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018, Progress Report 2016
- LGBTI+ Youth Strategy: Report of the consultations with young people in Ireland
- 10th Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection
- 'So, How Was School Today?' Report of a survey on how young people are taught and how they learn
- 'Bhuel, Conas a bhí An Scoil Inniú?' Tuarascáil ar shuirbhé a rinneadh ar an gcaoi a múinteoir agus a bhfoghlaimíonn daoine óga
- Children First - National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Children First -Treoir Náisiúnta do Chosaint agus Leas Leanaí
- Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Annual Report Third Year Of Implementation April 2016 - 2017
- An Indicator Set for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures – FAQ's
- Report on the Indicator Set for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020
- Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group Annual Report 2016
- Diversity and Equality Guidelines for Childcare Providers
- DCYA Annual Report 2016
- DCYA Tuarascáil Bhliantúil 2016
- Young Voices - Have your say Summary Report
- National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Youth Work
- Implementation Plan for Tusla Actions arising from Dr. Shannon's audit of the application of section 12 by An Garda Síochána
- Report of the Workshop Discussions: Comhairle na nÓg Showcase November 2016
- Child Participation Structures in Ireland: Implementation of Agency Rights in the UNCRC
- Report of Consultations with Children on After-School Care
- Action Plan on Schoolage Childcare
- State of the Nation's Children: Key Findings Ireland 2016
- State of the Nation's Children: Ireland 2016

- Area Based Childhood Programme: Open Policy Debate Report
- A National Policy on Single Separation Use in Secure Accommodation for Children: Special Care and Oberstown
- An examination of concepts of school readiness among parents and educators in Ireland
- Sectoral Dialogue with Children, Young People and Other Stakeholders Regarding the Impact on the Lives of Children and Young People Of the UK's Decision to Leave the EU
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs Statement of Strategy 2016 - 2019 / Ráiteas Stratéise 2016-2019
- Growing Up in Ireland, Child Cohort: Off to a Good Start? Primary School Experiences and the Transition to Second-Level Education.
- Growing Up in Ireland, Infant Cohort: Understanding Use of General Practitioner Services Among Children in Ireland.
- Growing Up in Ireland Key Findings: Infant Cohort at 7/8 Years:  
No 1: School and Learning
- Growing Up in Ireland Key Findings: Infant Cohort at 7/8 Years:  
No. 2: Health and Development
- Growing Up in Ireland Key Findings: Infant Cohort at 7/8 Years:  
No. 3: Socio-emotional Development, Relationships and Play

### **Appendix III**

#### **Overview of Energy Usage in 2017**

This section sets out the energy usage in the Department of Children & Youth Affairs for 2017 and the steps taken to improve our energy performance. Returns are made to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on an annual basis and the 2017 performance is detailed below.

Agencies of the Department are responsible for reporting their own energy consumption to the SEAI and their consumption is not included in these figures.

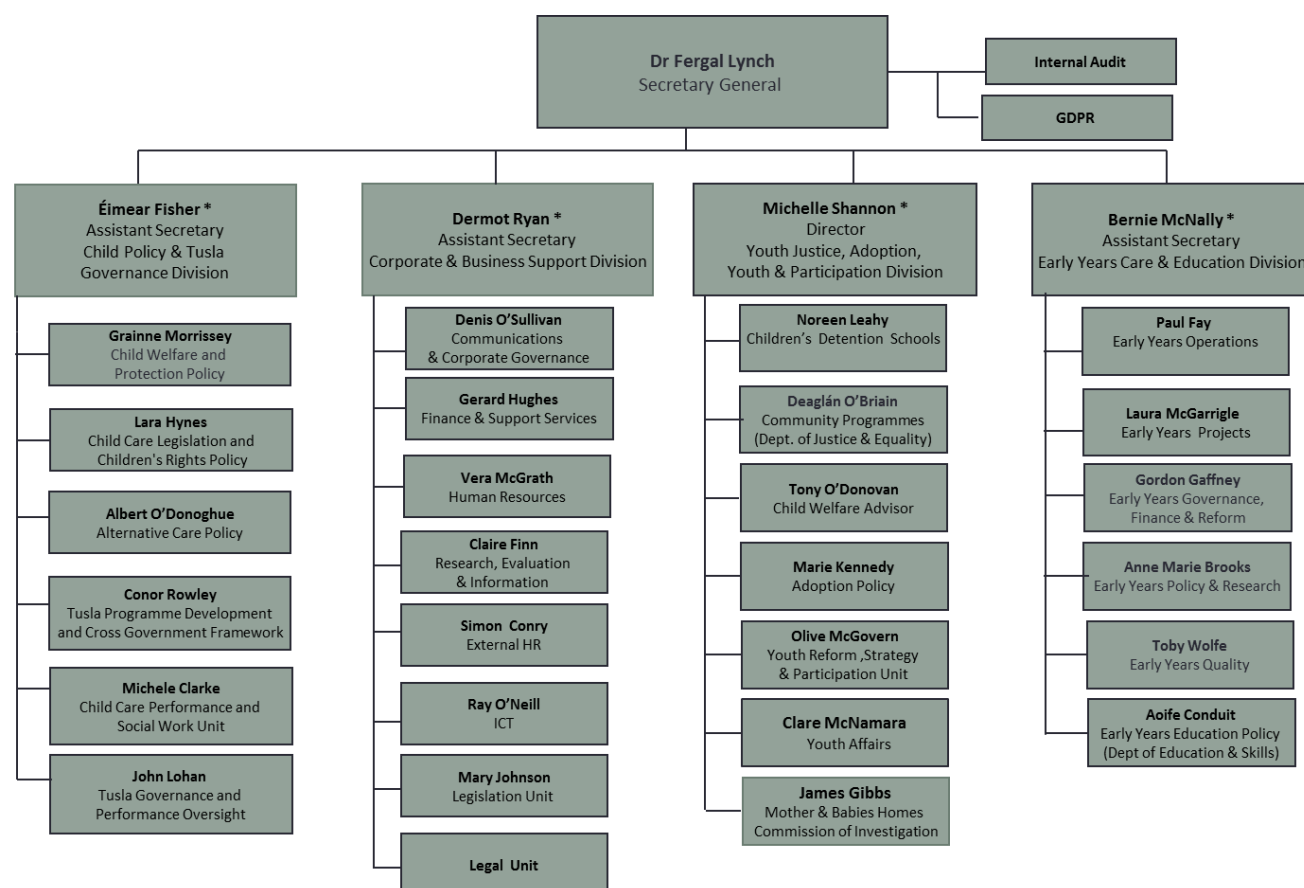
<b>Location/Year</b>	<b>Electricity kWH</b>	<b>Gas kWH</b>	<b>Total kWH</b>	<b>Total kWH/FTE</b>
<b>Headquarters, Mespil Road</b>				
<b>2017</b>	382,885	331,610	714,495	3242.84

The main initiative taken during 2017 was the Department's engagement in the OPW Optimising Power@work campaign. Quarterly meetings were held with the Aramark representative to discuss results of their monitoring programme, and take advice on how best to further reduce energy consumption.

## Appendix IV

### Organisation Chart & Bodies under the aegis of the Department

#### Management Board and Principal Officer Level Responsibilities



\* Designated Public Officials for the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015



## Bodies under the aegis of the Department and associated Commission

### **Tusla, Child and Family Agency**

Mr. Fred McBride  
Chief Executive Officer  
Heuston South Quarter  
St. John's Road West  
Kilmainham, Dublin 8.

### **Adoption Authority of Ireland**

Ms. Patricia Carey  
Chief Executive Officer  
Shelbourne House  
Shelbourne Road  
Dublin 4.

### **Children Detention Schools**

Mr. Pat Bergin  
Campus Manager  
Oberstown  
Lusk  
Co. Dublin.

### **Office of the Ombudsman for Children**

Mr. Niall Muldoon  
Millennium House  
52-56 Great Strand Street  
Dublin 1.

### **Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes (& Certain Related Matters)**

Judge Yvonne Murphy  
73 Lower Baggot Street  
Dublin 2.

### **Gaisce, the President's Award**

Yvonne McKenna  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ratra House, North Road  
Phoenix Park  
Dublin 8.

